

# KentuckyHistoricalSociety

## Primary Source Spotlight: “To the Citizens of Cynthiana and Harrison County”

One excellent example of a broadside that can stimulate classroom conversation in the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) Special Collections is [item 2008M04](#), titled “To the citizens of Cynthiana and Harrison County.” Because this announcement is dated Sept. 28, 1861, students automatically know that it is from the Civil War era. However, learners may not be aware of the significance of September 1861 in relation to Kentucky and the Civil War.

This broadside presents the perfect opportunity to discuss Kentucky’s unique position at the beginning of the war. Kentucky had originally claimed neutrality when the Civil War began in the spring of 1861, but by early September state neutrality had effectively ended. When Confederate forces under Gen. Leonidas Polk entered western Kentucky in an effort to stop a perceived threat from a Union command in Belmont, Miss., Union forces quickly flowed into the state at Paducah, Louisville and other Ohio River towns. Then, on Sept. 11, Kentucky legislators instructed Gov. Magoffin to order the Confederate forces to leave the state. Magoffin vetoed the Confederate-only expulsion, but the legislature overrode the veto and the governor reluctantly issued the order. By mid-September, native Kentuckian and Fort Sumter hero, Robert Anderson (also mentioned in this broadside), had been given command of the state’s Union forces.

This document abounds with historical questions that can stimulate student critical thinking. Who is Col. Ferdinand Vanderveer? Why did these soldiers make their encampment on the Kentucky Central Railroad? Why was it called Camp Frazer? Why do you think Col. Vanderveer found it necessary to issue a broadside?

Many important questions can be drawn out of one sentence, “They [his soldiers] will hold no conversation with your negroes, or suffer them to come within the lines of our encampment.” This particular statement serves as an excellent occasion for students to examine Kentucky’s unique and sometimes confusing role as a border state that was pro-slavery but did not secede. It was not until after Pres. Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation—which ironically did not apply to Kentucky—that African Americans were regularly accepted into the Union army. Blacks in Kentucky did not start enlisting in significant numbers until early 1864.

Kentucky eventually proved to be an important recruiting field for the United States Colored Troops (USCT), but in September 1861 the war was still about reuniting the country, not emancipating slaves. By the end of the war Camp Nelson, located in Jessamine County, was one of the largest USCT recruiting and training camps in the nation and Kentucky had sent more African American soldiers to the Union army than any other state except Louisiana. The contributions of the USCT to the war effort went a long way toward ending the long and bloody conflict.

Any number of extension activities could be developed from this source and the questions that stem from it. For example, students could locate Harrison County and Cynthiana on a period [railroad map](#) and trace the route of the railroad line to see its importance. The Kentucky Central Railroad ran from present day Covington on the Ohio River, south through Cynthiana

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and Paris to Lexington, then south to Danville. This railroad supplied Union troops in the state with important war materiel such as arms, ammunition and food from Cincinnati depots. The Kentucky railroads also proved to be a vulnerable and valuable target for Confederate raiders such as John Hunt Morgan, who made a number of forays into the Bluegrass state.

The next time you are searching for primary sources to use in your classroom, be sure to browse the [KHS Digital Collections Catalog](#) for other broadsides and handbills.